Memos and Emails

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[Video](https://linnbenton.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=6745514a-da6b-4136-8dad-b01b012fd8ab&start=0)

[Slide Deck](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1bpuSaALMQKSqRwjY6lOiJ7VAC9qsYVLgyfppWCw68YI/edit?usp=sharing)

# Goals

In this presentation, we will discuss:

* What memos and emails are.
* When to write a memo and when to write an email.
* How to write an effective memo and email.

# Communication Documents

When choosing how to communicate, you need to consider whether you are writing to someone within or outside of your workplace. When writing to someone within, the document is considered internal. When writing to someone outside, the document is considered external.

Letters and emails are considered external documents.

Emails (if written to a colleague or supervisor, or anyone inside your workplace) and memos are considered internal documents.

# Professional Emails

## Emails

Emails can be both internal and external documents. When writing an email, use a professional address. If not through a workplace or school, such as when you are applying for a job, make sure you have a professional-looking email address. For example, an unprofessional email address might be theclubguru@gmail.com. A professional email might be smithj33@gmail.com. A good tip is to use your name in some way.

The basic structure of an email is something most of us are familiar with:

To:

From:

Subject:

Content:

## *To* Line

To prevent big mistakes, you want to pay attention to whom you are writing the email. First, do not enter a recipient until you are ready to send. This prevents unfinished emails from being sent prematurely. Next, always double check that you have the correct person and email address. You do not want to make the mistake of sending the wrong information to the wrong person. Lastly, if sending to multiple people, use the carbon copy (CC) and blank carbon copy (BCC) appropriately.

* Choose CC if you want all addresses visible. This is helpful especially if you are sending information to a colleague, which a superior should know.
* Choose BCC if you want to send the email to additional people, but you do not want everyone to be able to see everyone else’s emails (for privacy) or you do not want someone knowing that you are sending the email to another person.

## Subject Line

Be specific. For example,

* Nonspecific Subject: Question
* Specific Subject: Question regarding the use of H5P in presentations

Be concise. The subject should be specific enough to give the reader an idea of what is in the email, but short enough that it is quickly read and understood. Keep it under 60 characters.

When writing your subjects, think about when you need to search your inbox for an email. You want to find the correct email with the information you need, so the subject hopefully is concise and specific enough to find it quickly. You want your receivers to be able to do the same when searching for your emails.

## Salutation

The salutation is how you address the person you are writing to. Be specific and respectful. If you are unfamiliar with the person, use *dear* (or more casually, *hello*) and a colon. If you are familiar with and know that the person is more casual, you can use a comma after the person’s name.

Be cautious when dealing with names. You will want to do your research to know how the person would like to be addressed. If responding to an email, look at how the person signed off. If dealing with a superior or need a sense of formality, you can use Mr., Ms., and so on, but be careful that you know what the person prefers. Otherwise, it is safer to use the person’s full name. If you have an email address but not a specific person (or are sending to many people), you may just omit the salutation and just begin the content.

## Body

This is where the content is. In the first paragraph, state your purpose. Be clear about why you are writing the email and any background information the receiver may need.

In the middle paragraph(s), provide details about why you are writing and the information the receiver needs to know. Be clear yet concise, and make it easy for the recipient to read. If you are writing a longer email, consider using headings for major sections.

In the last paragraph, close by stating clearly what action needs to be taken (if needed), and provide the best way for the recipient to respond. Are you wanting an emailed response by a certain date? Do you want the recipient to call you?

Throughout professional emails, avoid emoticons, keep the message specific but concise, use block paragraph (and single-spaced) style, and mention any attachments so the recipient knows to look for them.

## Sign Off

When signing off from your email, do so respectfully and appropriately. You would not want to say such words and phrases as *sincerely yours*, *yours truly*, or *love.* Instead, a couple good choices are *sincerely*, *respectfully*, or *regards*. Then write your name as you would like them to address you. Include any additional information the recipient should know, such as your phone number and/or office location.

## Attachments

Use appropriate names for files. Instead of *letter.pdf*, you may want to change it to something more specific, such as *JSmith letter of acceptance.pdf*. Triple check that you have indeed attached the document and that it is the correct one. As we discussed earlier, mention any attachments in the email message itself to ensure the recipient knows to look for the attachment.

## Responding to an Email Received

Pay attention to whether you should respond individually or to the group. Far too often, many people hit *respond all* when it is not appropriate. If someone is asking for an individual response and others do not need to get that response, only respond to the sender (not the entire group). Often after someone emails, especially if the email thread has been through some back-and-forth, you may leave off the greeting but *always* sign off with your name.

## Video

For more about email etiquette, let’s watch the following video.

# Memoranda (also known as Memos)

## Video

Before we begin, let’s watch the following video about memos.

## Memos

Memos are internal documents that are written within the workplace. If you look at the structure of a memo, what does it remind you of? An email, right? So basically, a memo is an email in print form, only for use within the workplace.

## *To* Line

Be specific and intentional. Who are you writing this to? A person? A group? Which group specifically? If it is to an individual or small group, write out each person’s first and last name.

## *From* Line

After *from*, type your name and sign your initials in blue ink next to your name. Why blue ink? Blue ink has been the standard way to sign documents in the past and is still the standard in some companies, especially banks. When you sign in blue, it shows your care and understanding of the standard, especially when handwritten.

## Structure

Much like emails, memos use block paragraphs and are single spaced. Memos should be brief, so try to keep them to one-to-two pages.

Memos typically do not have a salutation, such as *dear* so-and-so. Instead, you just begin the content. In the first paragraph, state your purpose. Be clear about why you are writing the memo. In the middle paragraph(s), provide details. Be clear yet concise, and make it easy to read. (If long, consider using headings for major sections.) In the last paragraph, close by stating clearly what action needs to be taken (if needed), and provide the best way to contact you (typically, an email address and/or phone number).

No sign off (Sincerely…) is needed. Make sure you list any enclosures, just as you would attachments in an email.

# Memos and Emails as Technical Documents

## Formatting

* Use headings if needed (especially if the document is long). These are typically in bold font, so that way users can find what they need quickly.
* Use block paragraphing and single spacing, unless told otherwise.
* Use the appropriate document for the situation. Are you writing to someone within the workplace or outside of it?
* Be simple and concise in your wording. Remember: KISS: Keep it short and simple.

## Reminders

* When writing any document, keep your audience (the user/recipient) in mind. What do they need?
* Revise! Always read over (or have someone else read over) your document. Pay attention to your tone and make sure you say what you want to say and how you want to say it.
* Use document design.
  + Headings
  + Bold print
  + Color if needed or wanted
  + White space
* Edit!
  + Technical writing avoids unnecessary adjectives and adverbs.
  + Keep wording concise.
  + Keep it simple.

# Conclusion

Emails and memos are documents that you will use nearly every day. Remember these lessons and tips to write them professionally and more effectively for your audience.